THE

# EVIDENCE;

OR,

## Religious and Moral Gazette.

*RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.*

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No. II.

*To Young people, &c. containing deductions from No. I.*

IN the preceding number, it was shown, that there was a period when the world did not exist ; that the heaven and the earth had a beginning ; that if they had a beginning, they must have had a cause of their existence : and that if they had a cause of their existence, this cause must have been adequate to the effect ; and if so, the world was created by an infinite cause, which must be God himself, and also, that every attribute belonging to this infinite cause, must be infinite in itself, and that this whole chain of reasoning is in perfect conformity to the Mosaic account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. The design of the present number is to draw conclusions from the foregoing.

1st. WE may be assured, that if the world was indebted to an infinite cause, or a God of all possible perfection, it is incredible to suppose there can be more than one such being in the Universe. The very self-same argument which goes to prove the existence of one God, proves also that there is but one. The argument is equally strong in one case as in the other. If there were two or more infinite beings, it could never be known by us, because they must be exactly alike, and their works the same. In this case each one must fill immensity, each must be all and in all, and each must do all things in the same sense and to the same extent. This would destroy divisibility and leave no room for distinction of essence. If we can account for the existence of all things from the consideration of one infinite being, from what visible effect can we argue the existence of another ? From one being of infinite perfection we can account for whatever we behold ; and if so should we believe in another God, what have we to sustain that belief ? After we have assented to the existence of one God from the things that are made, it becomes too late to argue from effect to cause to prove another, because we have, previously assigned an adequate cause for every object we behold. Should we suppose two Gods in any respect different, in this case the one would be superior and the other inferior, which would destroy the supposition. If we should maintain the idea of more Gods than one, we might with equal propriety hold to a number indefinitely great. But what confronts the idea at once is, that there is no evidence of more than one God. Visible objects wear no other impression, than that of one forming hand. If

then we should believe in more Gods than one, our belief must be without a particle of evidence. And what is belief without evidence, but committing our faith to the winds.

The Magi of Persia held to two Gods of equal power, but their belief had nothing to support it. It was an idle imagination. Polytheism arose from mere fancy, and not from argument founded on fact or experience. Had the avowers of this doctrine, ascribed to any one of their gods infinite perfection, they might have accounted for every thing in being without having had recourse to any other. Or had they considered no one of their gods equal to the creation and government of the world, reason might have led them to renounce the whole, and seek for a power beyond them. But they were "vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man and to birds and creeping things and fourfooted beasts." The argument in favor of more gods than one, is really a plea against any god at all; because it supposes no one of the number adequate the production of the world and the things therein. But so soon as the existence of one God of infinite perfection is established, the arguments in favor of any other fall to the ground. To this agree the united declarations of scripture. "The Lord our God is one Lord. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) but to us there us but one God the father of whom are all things."

2d. We may fairly conclude, that if the heaven and the earth were created by an infinite being, then this being must exercise a universal and particular providence over all worlds, creatures and events. Finite existences must be absolutely dependent on that power which gave them existence. To suppose otherwise is attributing independence to that which is finite, and not only so, but to every part and particle of creation, whether material or immaterial. This would be making as many independent objects, as there are atoms in the universe, which would defeat the idea of their production by a cause, and of course sap all evidence of divine existence from objects around us.

If, as plainly appears, God in wisdom made the world, must not the same wisdom induce in him to govern it? If all creatures and things were created by God, they must be his in the strictest sense. He must be there sole owner. They must be at his disposal and management. If God made the world for an important end, must he not control the effect of his own wisdom and power to answer that end, in the best possible manner, provided he has a right so to do? And will any one dare to contend with God this right? Beside it must be easy for God to dispose and order all things by his universal and particular providence, because nothing can be difficult for infinite power and wisdom to perform. It is, moreover, no less certain that God does control all worlds creatures and events, than that these things are indebted to him for existence. For should he withdraw his upholding and governing hand they would instantly fall back into their original nothingness. If an object is indebted to a cause for existance, it must be indebted to the

same cause for the continuation of its existence. To conceive the world to be upheld without a cause, is as difficult as to conceive it should begin to exist without a cause. The government of God, therefore, must be as extensive as creation. It embraces all created existence.

Behold then, an every-where existing, all-powerful and wise being managing all worlds and creatures; presiding over and ordering all occurrences, moving the wheels with infinite exactness and steadiness according to the destiny of his infinitely intelligent mind. Not regardless of the smallest circumstances, not indifferent to the least minutia, not suspending the energies requisite to order throughout his wide dominion, Jehovah is displaying every perfection of his nature in the government of his works. Should you ascend to that world which is irradiated with the brightest display of his glory you would hear the melody of that host which no man can number, shouting in strains of the highest praise, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Should you have disclosed to you the regions of despair you would behold a wretched multitude dreadfully pressed with a sense of divine displeasure. All the inhabitants of this world are in the open view of the invisible Jehovah, and each individual is in his hand as the clay is in the hand of the potter. Every motion of the body, every exercise of the soul however secreted from human inspection, lie without disguise before God and within the sphere of his dominion. The universal and particular providence of God over all creatures and worlds, is as certain as that the heaven and the earth were created by him, and stand supported on the same principles and by the same arguments.

3d. We may conclude, if the heaven and the earth were created by God, then no reason can be given why they may not have an end.

A vast list of infidels have asserted the contrary, but what reason have they thus to do on principles the most plain and self-evident? If there is an infinite being who hath made all things and upholds and governs the world, must not all things fall back into their primitive nothingness, if he should choose. The world was created by a divine choice, is upheld by the same, and if God should choose its discontinuance at any time, its existence must terminate. It is as easy to annihilate as to create; neither is the one more mysterious than the other. Suppose an angel to have existed, prior to the formation of the material universe, suppose this angel to receive information that it was the purpose of Deity to create innumerable worlds, must not this appear as mysterious to him, as their dissolution does now to us? In an abstract view there is not less mystery in the one, than in the other. Because men of corrupt minds, who give little or no credit to divine testimony, suggest difficulties and multiply doubts respecting the event we are contemplating, it does not become us to have our faith staggered in the least. The voice of the multitude is not always to be regarded. The incredulous are no standard for us. We have a more sure word of prophesy to which we will do well to give heed." What would have become of Noah and his family had he gone with the multitude in opinion and discredited God? It becomes us to be guided by light and evidence and think soberly as we ought to think. Shall we say with infidel scoffers, "the Lord delayeth his coming, and be-

gin to eat and to drink and be drunken," and despise the counsel of the most high ? Shall we not much rather be of those who by faith " look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ?" To the eye of condid observation, many things indicate the dessolution of the world to be very possible, and even probable. From small objects, we may reason respecting those which are larger. How many objects are there shooting up before us, and continuing for a short space, then returning back whence they sprung. This is true of vegetable and animal bodies innumerable. Were not such appearances familiar to our senses, we should view them as perfectly mysterious, as though the sun and the moon should be plucked from their spheres. Partial dessolutions admonish us of that which is universal—even the dissolution of the world and the system therewith connected. Well may we recieve the solemn admonition, when we reflect that these things had a beginning, and are now upheld by a cause, which at any instant is able to destroy. This great question, could never have been absolutely settled had not God been pleased to make known his mind to us on the subject. The scriptures obviate and set the matter beyond controversy, that this world and all therein shall be dissolved. As it is wrtten, " The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Christ himself prophesied of this wonderful event and its attending circumstances. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the worlds, for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." St. John saw in a vision the earnest of this awful event. " And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was no place for them." Christ will make his appearance in the cloud of heaven, gather his people from every part of the earth, " and then shall the angel swear by him that liveth forever and ever that time shall be no longer." Considering God's creative and upholding power, and the general analogy of things, and that that which is possible and highly probable in the nature of things is attested by the possitive declarations of scripture, we may be assured we are to be eye-witness of an event more stupendous, grand and awful than was exhibited, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Considering therefore, that all these things must have an end, how important that we " be sober and watch unto prayer. E.

## *The Evidences of Jesus Christ from the prophecies.*

THE noblest evidences of our Lord are the prophecies, which preceded him. And, accordingly, it has pleased God to exercise a peculiar care in this behalf; for the full accomplishment of them being a perpetual miracle, which reacheth from the beginning to the end of the church. Sixteen hundred years together, God raised up a succession of prophets ; and, during the space of four hundred years after, he dispersed these prophecies, together with the Jews that kept them, through all regions of the world. See the wonderful preparation to our Lord's appearance. As his gospel was to be embraced and believed by all nations, there was a ne-

cessity not only of prophecies to gain it this belief, but likewise of diffusing these prophecies to the same extent of human race.

Supposing one single man to have left a book of predictions concerning Jesus Christ, as to the time and manner of his coming; and supposing him to have come agreeably to these predictions, the arguments would be of almost infinite force. Yet here the evidence is stronger, beyond all comparison. A succession of men, for the space of four thousand years, follow one another, without interruption or variation, in fortelling the same great event. A whole people are the harbingers of the great Messias; and such a people as subsisted four thousand years, to testify, in a general body, their assured hope and expectation, from which no severity of threats or persecution could oblige them to depart. This is a case which challengeth, in a far more transcendent degree, our assent and wonder.

The time of our Lord's appearance was signified by the state of the Jews; by the condition of the heathen world; by the comparison between the two temples; and even by the precise number of years which should intervene.

The prophets have also given various marks of the Messias who was to come; it seemed necessary that these marks should all concur at the same period. Thus it was necessary that the fourth monarchy should be established ere the expiration of Daniel's seventy weeks, that the sceptre should then depart from Judah, and that the Messias should then immediately appear. In pursuit of which predictions, our Lord appeared at this juncture, and demonstrated his claim to the style and character of the Messias.

The Jews, in putting to death Jesus Christ, whom they believed not to be the Messias, gave him the final mark and assurance of the Messiah's character. The more they persisted in denying him, they still became the more infallible witnesses of the truth; for to disown and to slay him, was but to join their own testimony to that of the prophecies, which they fulfilled.

The present condition of the Jews is a singular confirmation of our faith. It is astonishing to see this people, during so vast a course of years, never extinguished, and yet ever miserable, as having been his crucifiers. And though to subsist, and to be miserable, are contrarieties ungrateful to nature, yet they fail not to maintain their subsistence, under all the power of their misery.

*Pascal's Thoughts on Religion.*

## PSALM 4—6.

"Who will shew us any good?" is the language of every person living. Some seek it in riches, and vainly imagine if they could attain a certain sum they should be happy; and behold, the Almighty gives them their hearts desire. Their riches increase until their coffers are runing over and they have not where to bestow their wealth. Is their happiness therefore increased? No, could riches make us happy, then Solomon had been completely so; for Silver and Gold were with him as plentious as stones; and yet we hear him exclaiming "vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit." Again some fancy happiness is to be found in wisdom: Here again Solomon who was wi-

ser than all the kings of the earth will furnish an example; He saith "in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Neither is this good to be found in favour and power: Who was ever raised higher than Haman, whom the king set above all the princes that were with him, and commanded all his servants to bow and do him reverence? Yet one uncomplying Mordicai, was sufficient to destroy this air built fabric of happiness. Where then is this good, after which the immortal soul so eagerly pants to be found, since all earthly things prove fallacious? Let us see what answer the spirit of God dictates to the royal prophet, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;" that shall rejoice our hearts more than all created good—yea the light of his countenance "who siteth in the Heavens, and rides on the wings of the wind," will fill the soul with supreme delight, altho' "every earthly good should take to itself wings and flee away." It would cheer us in the most gloomy solitude, or deepest dungeon. It animated the faith of those worthies who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. It supported Lazarus the beggar. It animated the countenance of Daniel in the Lion's den. It caused anthems of praise to arise from the three children in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, and will swell the notes of all the redeemed to the endless ages of eternity. Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance on me, it is all the happiness I ask.

B.

## ANECDOTE

### *OF DOCTOR DARWIN.*

THE anecdote in a late number of the magazine of a disciple of Darwin, I read, not with surprise, but with pity for the unhappy man, and an increased disgust with that pernicious philosophy, by which it is to be feared thousands are ruined.

HOWEVER high the character of Dr. Darwin may stand in the estimation of mankind, as a physician, a philosopher, or a poet, the following anecdote sufficiently demonstrates his obduracy and degradation as a father, and as a man.

ANNA Seward, from whose biographic pen the life of Dr. Darwin has been exhibited, informs us, that his eldest son had "a gentle, ingenuous, and affectionate heart," and that, on his death, he left "an untainted reputation for probity and benevolence; beloved, respected, and mourned by all who knew him." Mr. Darwin, "while his profession in life was undetermined, expressed a wish to go into the church rather than the law. That preference was repulsed by parental sarcasms upon its indolence, and imputed effemincy. From infancy to his last day, Mr. Darwin had shrunk, with pained sensibility, from his father's irony."

THIS young man, having met with some embarrassment in busi-

ness, " on a December evening cold and stormy," went down to the river Derwent, which ran at the bottom of his garden, and terminated his existence amid its waves. The discovery, shortly after, of Mr. Darwin's hat and neckcloth, created alarm. Boats were sent out. Dr. Darwin, the father, was summoned. Each spectator probably expected to discover in his countenance, all the risings of parental surprise and wretchedness.—Far otherwise. " He staid a long time on the brink of the water apparently calm and collected. The body could not be found till the next day. When the doctor received information that it was found, he exclaimed in a low voice, " *Poor insane coward,*" and it is said never after mentioned the subject. " It excited," and well it might excite, " universal surprise to see him walking along the streets, the day after the funeral of his son, with a serene countenance and his usual cheerfulness of address." Nay more, as if to show, that the privation of natural affection was a virtue, " He took immediate possession of the premises his son had left, laid plans for their improvement, took pleasure in describing those plans to his acquaintance, and determined to make it his future residence, and all this without seeming to recollect to how sad an event he owed their possession."

Let the reader contrast the insensibility of a Darwin with the amiable grief of a David. 2 Sam. xviii. 33. " And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said; O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! But as to the philosopher,

" *Num fletu ingemuit? num lumina flexit?*
" *Num lachrymas victus dedit?*"

Let the infidel beware, lest the stoicism he boasts prove, in its issue, to be that " hardness, and impenitence of heart, which treasures up unto itself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God."

A. M. M.

*Sketches from Ancient History.*

In the thirty fourth year of our blessed Saviour's life, he was crucified by the wicked hands of the Jews, which was attended with prodigious effects, that were afterwards attested as well by the Heathens as Christians. At the time of his death a very great darkness happened in the day-time, which continued from six o'clock till nine, and yet there was no eclipse of the sun, for it was at full noon, so that it was miraculous and to contrary to the order of nature, and only by the power of God who deprived the sun of its light for that space of time: And therefore Dennis the Areopagite being that day in Athens, and see-

ing the sun so darkened, and also knowing as a man learned in astronomy, and the course of the heavens that such an Eclipse must needs be contrary to the laws of nature, exclaimed with a loud voice "Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers." And upon this account, say some authors, the wise men of Athens being astonished at this prodigy, presently caused an altar to be built to the *unknown God.*

After this St. Paul coming hither reproved them, declaring to them that Jesus Christ the redeemer of the world who had suffered, was that unknown God, whereby he converted many of them to the Christian faith, which doth also demonstrate that the darkness was over the whole hemisphere, since it was seen at Athens and at other places far remote from Jerusalem; yea, the moon being then at full, and having no light but what she hath from the splendor of the sun, and being then in the firmament that is under us, she became violently Eclipsed, and darkened, so that the darkness was universal all over the world, because the moon can give no light, unless first borrowed from the sun. W.

## *HINT TO YOUTH.*

A course of reading, that consists of amusement principally, such as those fictitious histories which have become so fashionable to the great injury of more solid improvements, weakens and effeminates the mind, renders the taste sickly, prevents the ideas of real life, and disqualifies both man and woman for fulfilling with dignity and prudence the duties that belong to them either in the civil or domestic relations. To hope to become scholars or men of business, by such slight occupations of the fancy, and such gentle agitations of the heart, would be like an attempt to make Greek or Roman soldiers by listening to the soft notes of the flute, or exercising the limbs only in the swiming mazes of the dance. But industrious application to useful studies tends to cultivate the heart, it ennobles our being—it will prepare for you the public confidence and esteem, and, a motive that will be much more sensibly felt by young and ingenuous minds, it will fulfil the wishes and complete the felicity of parents who have every title to your love, and whose happiness next to your duty to God, should be your first pleasure and your first care,

*Smith's Sermons.*

## *ANECDOTE.*

After the signal victory off Trafalgar, one of the Spanish ships was taken possession of by the British; on board of which the Spanish captain addressed the Priest as follows: "Father, there has been a serious loss on our part: it appears that God fights for the Protestants!" To whom the Priest gravely replied, "Yes, he has fought for them indeed! and by this battle, it should seem that God himself is a Protestant!"

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